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INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 8570
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 0271
RUEHCD/AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ 0251
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 0250
RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 0252
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH AFB UK
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000260

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA, DS/IP/AF, DS/ICI/PII, DS/DSS/OSAC
WARSAW FOR LISA PIASCIK
CIUDAD JUAREZ FOR DONNA BLAIR
ISTANBUL FOR TASHAWNA SMITH
SAO PAULO FOR ANDREW WITHERSPOON
DOE FOR GPERSON, CAROLYN GAY
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS, SRENENDER, DFIELDS
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS
STATE PASS USTR FOR ASST USTR FLISER
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN AND MSTUCKART
STATE PASS TDA FOR NCABOT
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/28/2017

TAGS: [NI](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#)

SUBJECT: FORGET FREE & FAIR ELECTIONS; SMALL STEPS TO
DEMOCRACY

REF: LAGOS 142

LAGOS 00000260 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) Summary: The People's Democratic Party (PDP) would take the presidency and most governorships as a result of the elections while the Action Congress (AC) would take the majority of the legislature, predicted Francis Sheen, a Bayelsa State official working on the PDP's presidential campaign. Though free and fair elections would not occur, our interlocutor told Poloff in a March 13 meeting that the result would constitute small steps toward democracy. The majority of candidates running in the April elections represent a more educated generation than the "old guard." End Summary.

AC Gaining Strength; Will Take House of Assembly

12. (C) Vice President Atiku's Action Congress (AC) camp is gaining strength as members of General Mohammadu Buhari's All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) are defecting, Francis Sheen, a Bayelsa State official working on the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) 2007 presidential campaign told Poloff on March 13. However, Sheen does not believe the AC will threaten the People's Democratic Party (PDP). No matter how emotional,

jubilant and supportive Atiku's rallies become, the attendees are not strong voters likely to go to the polls in April. While the AC has the money to rig an election, it does not have PDP's experienced machinery and know-how, our interlocutor said. At the end of the day, Sheen predicted the PDP would retain the presidency and most governorships while the AC may make a strong showing--nearly capturing a majority--in the National Assembly.

Forget Free & Fair Elections; Vote Rigging More Subtle

13. (C) Vice President Atiku is not a member of the Action Congress (AC), he is the AC, Sheen commented. If Atiku fails in his quest for the presidency, Sheen predicted he would depart the political scene. Since there are no other AC members able to carry the party banner, the party could collapse, he predicted. Regardless of the AC's future as a party, Sheen viewed its very existence as a sign of real political competition, and a positive step towards democracy. Sheen expects more political issue-based campaigns in the next elections.

14. (C) Sheen said Nigerians' understanding of democracy has matured after eight years of civilian rule following decades of military leadership. Reflecting this trend, the PDP is adjusting to what Sheen termed the "arithmetic of candidates" to ensure vote counts equal registered voters. While the elections would not be free or fair, Nigerians now understand democracy enough and they would not accept flagrant inaccuracies, Sheen said.

Young, Educated Generation Moving Out Septuagenarians

LAGOS 00000260 002.2 OF 002

15. (C) Septuagenarian members of the "old guard" are being replaced by a better-informed younger generation, Sheen commented. PDP presidential candidate Governor Yar'Adua and running mate Governor Jonathan personify a marked shift from the old guard. Yar'Adua is a chemist and Jonathan an academic, both well-educated "young" men without the political baggage their predecessors carried. Sheen praised Yar'Adua's improvements to basic education in Katsina, commenting one must consider the results from an African's perspective and understand how dismal education was in Katsina prior to Yar'Adua's governorship.

16. (C) Looking at Bayelsa, Sheen appraised PDP gubernatorial candidate Chief Timipre Sylva and running mate, Peremobowei Ebebi, as academics from a new generation. Since Sylva is adopting Jonathan's policies and support structure, Sheen reasons, Bayelsa will remain calm and on its current development path. Regardless of who takes the presidency, business projects in Bayelsa will continue, Sheen predicted.

Comment

17. (C) Sheen, a government official working with the PDP, all but admitted the elections will be manipulated, largely by the PDP. However, he added that other parties, chiefly the AC, will also attempt to direct the result but that these parties do not enjoy the advantage that incumbency gives the PDP. This is a realistic view. However, Sheen's premise that more subtle fabrication may mean an advance of democracy is a difficult postulate to digest. End Comment.
BROWNE